TOWN & COUNTRY CHURCH

In This Issue

This issue is different. It is devoted to a summary and interpretation of recent studies of the town and country church situation.

For many years we have been asked for information such as is given in this number.

Dr. H. Paul Douglass prepared the material at the request of the Committee on Town and Country.

The studies summarized were made by or in cooperation with the Committee for Cooperative Field Research. Dr. Douglass is director of the technical staff of the Committee.

The studies were made of various communities, as listed in the text.

No claim is made that the areas studied are "typical." The areas were studied at the request of a number of agencies, at such times as the requests were received or as they could be handled.

Dr. Douglass is author of *The Little Town, How Shall Country Youth be Served?, The Suburban Trend, The Church in the Changing City,* etc., etc. He was editor of *Christendom* from 1938 until 1948.

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Some Protestant Churches in Rural America

A Summary and Interpretation

H. PAUL DOUGLASS

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I. Introduction

• This report attempts to gather up the main findings of a body of studies in the rural church completed by the Committee for Cooperative Field Research and its predecessor agencies between 1941 and to the end of 1949. Studies still in process are not included.

Field Research Studies. Under the sponsorship of the Home Missions Council of North America and the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America (and latterly of the International Council of Religious Education), the Committee has produced sixteen rural field studies, which are listed below:

Date	*Title*
1941	Hunterdon County, N. J., Churches —Data and Discussion Outline
1941	Churches of Tioga County, N. Y.
1942	The Co-operative Interchurch Survey of the Intermountain Area
1943	Memorandum re Protestant Episcopal Rural Parishes, Jefferson County, N. Y.
1944	The Churches of Warren County, N. J.
1945	Seven Wisconsin Town-Centered Communities: (Arcadia, Barron, Elkhorn, Fennimore, Medford, Mt. Horeb and Waupaca)
1945-6	Sussex County, N. J. A Study of the Churches
1946	Some Iowa Rural Churches
1946	Churches in Thirty Iowa Rural Communities—Case Studies—(supplement to Some Iowa Rural Churches)
1948	A Study of Protestant Churches in Douglas, Whiteside and Hancock Counties, Illinois
1948	Protestantism in Carroll County, Georgia
1949	The Churches of Three Missouri Counties: Lawrence, Callaway and Gentry

Eight of the studies were directed by H. Paul Douglass, four by Don F. Pielstick, three by Ross W. Sanderson, and one by Richard A. Myers. Associated with them in direction and in field work were members of national staffs, or locally designated persons, of Baptist, Disciples, Evangelical and Reformed, United Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, Protestant Episcopal and other denominations. Many of the studies had the definite collaboration of agricultural departments of state universities and colleges and of the local representatives of the Agricultural Extension Service.

The number of projects is arrived at by counting three county studies each in Illinois and Missouri as individual projects, since they were separately made, reported and published, though undertaken under common sponsorship.

The counties and communities studied were located in seven states. They were chosen as typical of rural church situations by representatives of the churches in the midwestern corn belt, the dairy communities of Wisconsin, and the mixed farming and dairy sections of the middle Atlantic states. The study of the Intermountain Area, focussing upon rural Protestant churches in Utah, involved the problems of irrigation and dry farming territory. The largely noncomparable study of Carroll County, Georgia, was a slender penetration of research into the deep South.

Origins and Motivation. Each study was undertaken in order to meet a specific request of the churches of some rural area, and was generally under the sponsorship of a local council of churches. Their circumstances were otherwise diverse; consequently the results are not wholly comparable. Different aspects of information are based on unequal numbers of cases. This is indicated in the manuscript of the *Expanded Report.*

To reiterate, the areas chosen for study invariably represented the choices by responsible sponsoring agencies, because it was believed that their study would throw light upon the typical problems of rural churches.

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"Rural" Redefined. The areas chosen, however, did not turn out to be, according to census definition, uniformly or equally rural. Two cities of between 10,000 and 20,000 population and fifteen smaller towns of urban size were included. The aggregate of this non-rural population equalled about one-third of the total.

The still more significant fact was that, within the strictly rural population, the non-farm element slightly exceeded the farm element.

This fortuitous yet realistic method of sampling rural society demonstrates that rural and non-rural church problems are not isolated from each other. "Rural" need not primarily mean agricultural.

It should be noted that all the territories chosen for study lay outside the metropolitan districts immediately surrounding the larger cities. Rural churches were included in the Committee's studies of Buffalo, Cincinnati, Louisville, Pittsburgh, Rhode Island, San Diego, Scranton, and Youngstown. This group of churches is the subject of a special section in a parallel report on the urban church, now in preparation. The relation between these adjacent rural churches, and those of normal rural communities included in this report, are discussed on p. 6.

Type and Limitations of the Studies. All the studies included in this report may properly be classified as of the reconnaissance or semi-intensive type. In addition to observations and interviews by field workers, all called for compilation of existing social and religious data, and they generally required the circulation of schedules. The time devoted ranged from an average of three days, where communities were studied in isolation, to about one month's time, when an entire county was covered. The published reports range from an equivalent of thirty to one-hundred typewritten pages.

A chief limitation of this series of studies is that the time available did not permit original analyses of basic community structure. Where this had been supplied by previous sociological studies it was utilized, as in the Iowa and Wisconsin studies. In the absence of such analyses, minor political divisions (towns and townships) were statistically treated as though they were communities, though manifestly they frequently were not. This lays the studies open to a possible misinterpretation of the relation of churches and communities, though this relationship was kept continuously in mind and the returns were repeatedly related to particular community data.

Local Authorization and Utilization. As above noted, the studies generally originated in requests for surveys from state or county councils of churches, and all but two were sponsored by councils. They were always presented to, and discussed by, representatives of the churches of the areas concerned, and were published and circulated upon their authorization and generally by these agencies. The considerable variations in the scope and method of the studies reflect these diverse origins. They were, however, invariably attempts to meet the specific problems of particular situations, and their primary use was by the particular sponsoring agencies.

Validity of Generalizations. The generalizations based upon these studies are claimed to be valid only for the areas covered and for others essentially like them. How many and what other areas are essentially like them is not precisely known, but the results are believed to be typical of wide rural areas of the United States. Obviously, important types of rural situations were not represented, and the reliability of the present data, as applied to them, is doubtful.

The generic problems of rural society and churches are undoubtedly highlighted by the data of this report, especially in the context of the larger body of knowledge of rural America. Conclusions believed to be derived from the data, but made intelligible against the total rural background, are offered in the final section of the report.

II. Condensed Summary of Basic Data

Status and Characteristics of the Churches

The thirteen statistically comparable units of study on which this report is based included 1,231 rural churches, with 228,336 members. The average church had 186 members; the smallest average was found in Utah (fifty members); the largest in Whiteside County, Illinois (264 members).

Denominations. Ninety-eight percent of the membership of the 1,231 churches belong to eighteen major denominations, generally with over 50,000 members each in the United States. While the sample is not adequately balanced to show the relative strength of the more regional denominations, it shows a preponderant rural strength of the nationally major denominations, the slender contribution of the minor ones, and the insignificance of the irregular types, measured by membership.

Sunday Schools. Eight percent of the reporting churches are without schools. The average enrollment of the rural Sunday school is 114, equalling 59.9 percent of church membership in the same churches. But this ratio varies broadly, from 95.5 percent in Utah to only 40.7 percent in seven Wisconsin villages.

Church Expenditures. The average local budget of the reporting churches is $2,648. In two Missouri counties, however, it falls to between $1,000 and $1,500, and in Utah it is only $648 per church. At the other extreme, the churches of Whiteside County, Illinois, which is slightly more than half urban, spent $6,608 per church.

Benevolences. Benevolences average $740 per church, which equals about 27.0 percent of the congrega-

ional expenditures of the same churches.

It will be noted that these average measures of the rural church are larger than those usually found in previous studies. This is due to the inclusion, as already explained, of churches in small cities in the areas of study.

Trends of Churches and Sunday Schools

As already indicated, the studies herein summarized were made at different times, and the calculation of church trends was for unequal periods, averaging fifteen years. It is, consequently, not possible from the data to say how much the rural churches have grown between fixed dates. The aggregate membership increase, however, for the different periods covered, was 6.9 percent,—showing that the rural churches of the sample had made slight gains in recent times.

Considering individual congregations, *there have been just about as many declining churches as growing ones.* The distribution of the sample was as follows:

Growing	39.9 percent
Stationary— (less than 10 percent change)	19.4 "
Declining	40.7 "

Four out of every ten churches have found themselves statistically on the downward path. This statement takes no account of completely lapsed churches.

Obviously a rigorous selective process among rural churches is under way, reflecting in part varying rates of population change. From the standpoint of membership gains the state of a large majority is unsatisfactory.

Sunday School Trends. Under the same limitations as to dates of calculation which apply to church membership, Sunday school enrollment has declined by 19.3 percent in the churches of the sample in recent times. At the initial periods of the several studies, Sunday school enrollment equalled 78 percent of church membership but had declined to 59 percent by the terminal periods. Six schools out of ten had fewer pupils than formerly, and actual gains are confined to about one-fourth of the schools.

Ongoing Church Life

Absentees. Fourteen percent of the listed church members in the reported sample were non-resident, the range in the several counties running from 9 percent to 21 percent. The absentee rate is greater in open country churches than in the towns.

This considerable fraction of non-residents seriously subtracts from the effective strength of the churches and greatly misrepresents their numbers in the more extreme cases.

Church Services and Attendance. Nearly one-fourth of the churches of the sample do not have services every Sunday. In the extreme case of Callaway County, Missouri, three-fourths of the churches do not hold services as often as weekly; on the other hand, one-third of the churches maintain a second Sunday service on the Sundays when they are open. Seventeen percent of the churches report mid-week services which run as high as one-fourth in some areas and are negligible or absent in others.

Average attendance at the main church service equals 43.6 percent of church membership. The average congregation is composed of seventy-nine persons. More than four out of every ten churches have congregations of less than fifty, and the most frequent and characteristic congregation of the entire rural sample has between twenty-five and fifty in attendance.

Photograph by Gustav Anderson
From A. Devaney, N. Y.

Religious Education. Average attendance at Sunday school equals 56.6 percent of enrollment. This means an average of actual attendance of fifty-nine. But the extremes in different counties are very far apart. Almost half of the Sunday schools have less than fifty in attendance on the average Sunday, and only 3.8 percent have as many as 200 in attendance. Religious educational processes,—departmentalization, group worship, projects, and the rest,—have to be adjusted to these exceedingly small numbers of pupils.

Supplementary Religious Education. Forms of religious education supplementing the Sunday school are reported by churches as follows: vacation church school, 60.9 percent; confirmation or preparatory church membership classes, 55.6 percent; mission study classes, 53.1 percent; Sunday school teacher training, 29.6 percent; week-day religious education, 24.3 percent; training for local church leaders, 19.4 percent.

Subsidiary Church Organizations. Adult, youth and child organizations, other than church and Sunday school and excluding church officers, average three per church. Six out of every ten were organizations for adults, about one-fourth organizations for youth, and less than 10 percent organizations for children. The preponderant type of adult organization consists of women's societies; of the youth organizations of the mixed groups of the denominational fellowship or Christian endeavor type.

Few churches have no adult subsidiary organization, but 31 percent have no youth subsidiary, and 75 percent no children's subsidiary. The fact that more than three out of every ten churches lack any youth organization constitutes a large and alarming omission with respect to a group on which the future of the church depends. These multitudes of rural churches are too small to maintain youth organizations.

Financial Methods. About six churches out of ten have regularly adopted budgets, and slightly less than half conduct every-member canvasses in order to secure stated pledges in advance. This leaves one-half financing themselves by catch-as-catch-can methods.

Property and Facilities

More than three-fourths of the reporting churches are supplied with electricity, pianos, church furnaces, and equipped kitchens. Slightly more than half have indoor toilets. Nearly three-fourths have parsonages, two-thirds of which are electrically lighted, but only one-third have running water. Outside bulletin boards, special equipment for recreation, indoor toilets in parsonages, stage equipment, and furnished lounges or parlors are highly infrequent in the sample as a whole, but occur notably more often in the more urbanized counties.

Seating Capacity. More than half of the reporting churches provide sittings for from 100 to 250 persons, and slightly less than 10 per cent for more than 500. But congregations average only seventy-nine, and are most frequently less than fifty; and only thirteen churches of the reporting sample have more than 300 in attendance. Seating capacity is generally more than ample.

Rooms Available for Sunday School. About four out of every ten reporting churches say that they have two to four rooms available for Sunday school uses in addition to the main place of worship, but 11 percent have none at all, and 11 percent more than ten.

Rural Ministries

Vacant Churches. About 10 percent of the churches were vacant at the time of the studies, but it was not possible to distinguish closely between habitual and temporary vacancies. The great majority of rural churches contrive to maintain a continuous ministry of some sort.

Resident and Non-resident Ministers. About seven out of every ten churches had ministers living at some point on their fields, but three out of every ten were served by ministers living outside of the community, often at some distance and, not infrequently, in other states.

Part-time and Full-time Ministries. Only two-thirds of the churches served by resident ministers have them all to themselves; the other third share them with one or other churches.

All told, 54.5 percent of churches with ministers were either under non-resident or part-time pastoral care. Only 10 percent of non-resident ministers serve only one church; "non-residence" generally means also part-time services.

Duration of Pastorates. Nearly half of the churches were served by ministers of at least two years' tenure in their present pastorates, but more than four out of ten have been in their present positions less than two years. There are too many short pastorates.

Education of Ministers. Nearly four out of every ten reporting ministers claim no specific professional preparation. More than half, however, have had the conventional college and seminary training, or better. Twelve percent of the cases represent "other combinations" or shortcuts to ministerial education.

In the more radical rural counties two-thirds of the ministers lack seminary or other special training. On the contrary in the most urban counties, as many as four-fifths are full seminary and college graduates.

Salaries. More than half of the ministers reporting receive salaries of less than $2,000, and 15.6 percent salaries of less than $1,000. The most typical salary, however, is from $2,000 to $3,000. However, about two-thirds of the ministers enjoy free parsonage rent in addition to cash salaries. These may add one-fifth to the real income of those who have them.

Secular Occupations. About 13 percent of the ministers reporting say that they carry on secular occupations in addition to their pastorates. These range from college professors to tombstone salesmen.

(Supporting data for the above condensed statements and treatment of additional topics are included in *Some Protestant Churches in Rural America, The Expanded Factual Report* [manuscript] in the files of the Committee for Co-operative

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III. Three Significant Aspects of the Rural Church

Supplementing the basic factual data summarized in the previous section, three aspects of the rural church have been chosen for consideration as especially significant in the light of the body of studies under review: (1) the contrast between the best and poorest churches institutionally considered; (2) the religious partnership of town and country; and (3) over-churching.

RURAL CHURCH CONTRASTS

Extraordinary contrasts exist within the realm of the rural church, as defined in this Report. The weakest and the strongest churches are far apart by all institutional measurements, and both groups diverge sharply from the average of all churches as presented in Part II.

This is shown in the case of 452 churches in four middle western counties, one eastern county and the churches of the Iowa intensive sample.*

Item	*Total Rural*	*Sample*
Number of Churches	1,231	452
Average Membership	185	184
Ratio Attendance to Membership	43.6	44.0
Average Sunday School Enrollment	114	112
Average Congregational Expenditures	$2,645	$2,819
Ratio Sunday School Enrollment to Church Membership	59.6	61.0

Quintile Division. The 452 churches were divided into fifths, according to number of members, and the characteristics of the lowest and the highest fifth compared. The lowest fifth is superior in the ratio of average attendance to membership. These churches have so few members that, unless relatively more constituents attended church, they could not operate at all. They show a slightly better ratio between Sunday school enrollment and attendance, and they report 117 Sunday school pupils per 100 members compared with fifty-four per hundred in the upper fifth of the churches. In brief, they are more significant as Sunday schools than as churches.

The Lowest-Ranking Fifth. In all the other aspects measured they are astoundingly inferior, compared with the better churches of the total sample, and most flagrantly compared with the better churches of the same communities. This is shown in the following tabulation:

Item	*Lowest Fifth*	*Highest Fifth*
Membership	34	460
Sunday School Enrollment	39	251
Congregational Expenditures	$784	$5,876
Average Value of Property	$7,713	$44,017

The churches of the lowest-ranking fifth represent 20 percent of all churches but include only 3 percent of the total membership; those of the highest-ranking fifth include 44 percent of the membership. The churches of the lowest-ranking fifth supply only 6 percent of the total Sunday school enrollment instead of 20 percent; those of the highest-ranking fifth 40 percent.

All told, the aggregate collective strength of the lowest-ranking fifth of the churches is almost negligible. They could be eliminated without substantial loss to total church strength. It is known that as a group they maintain exceedingly fragmentary ministries. They represent only about 5 percent of the total congregational expenditures and only 5 percent of the total property values.

The situation is complicated, however, because these insignificant churches are very often united with others in payments to ministers. They are the marginal sources of church support, whose pittances nevertheless may make a crucial difference in a given situation.

These do not seem good reasons for perpetuating them to render such poor service in their own communities if any better method is possible.

It is to be insisted with the utmost positiveness that the rural church program must abandon no person or family or community, and

* This sample shows extraordinary similarity to the total of 1,231 churches on the crucial points shown below and may be safely taken as representative of the whole.

surrender no territory. It does not mean that fewer churches might not have equal outreach and more people be better served than under the present fragmentized methods.

Short of the absorption of the members of inefficient churches in stronger ones, methods of integrating them into more immediate combinations should be considered. Yoked churches of a given charge may be organized under parish councils, so that the representatives of the marginal congregations may share in the total plans; youth may be gathered into larger young people's groups; the Lord's Supper may be celebrated by several congregations together. At best, however, these remain mitigations, and the question has to be raised whether the feeblest fifth of the churches should continue to exist.

The Highest-Ranking Fifth. In most impressive contrast, the highest-ranking fifth of the churches approximates the average of the metropolitan church in membership and Sunday school enrollment. Their scale of financial expenditures and property investment is not that of city churches of comparable size. The best rural churches, however, are genuinely significant institutions relative to the American church as a whole. They are large enough for high efficiency under a one-man ministry. They represent very superior possibilities. They can do better by way of extension, and might effectively serve many of the few people of the lowest-ranking fifth of the churches if they would take the pains to assimilate them. Their standards, their leadership and their actual performance constitute highly significant and promising aspects of American church life.

The Religious Partnership of Town and Country in Individual Churches

The reports of 255 individual churches located in rural towns, as included in eight studies, distinguish between their town and open country members.

Town Members of Rural Churches. Their distribution by the percentage of members living in town, is shown for towns of varying size in Table I.*

All told, 36 percent of the town churches draw four-fifths or more of their members from town people, and only the remaining fragment from the country. These have little religious partnership with the area on which they have to depend for trade, and which their high schools, banks and newspapers habitually serve.

Substantiated and Significant Partnership. On the other hand, nearly half of the town churches draw from forty to eighty percent of their members from the country. They are thus identified with non-town people to the extent of from two-fifths to four-fifths of their total membership. Even with this range of difference, the partnership of the two elements of rural society is substantial and significant.

In Town but not of It. At the other extreme, 16 percent of the town churches draw 60 percent or more of their following from the country. They are country people's institutions located in town for convenience rather than by natural affinity. Often they have been moved in from the country, following their retired farmers who have settled in town. They tend to remain country oriented and little identified with town interests. They are town institutions primarily by location. They do not represent a normal partnership of town and country in the church.

Unequal Partnership. As shown in Table I the "townishness" of the church in general increases with the size of the town. Only 6 percent of the churches of the larger towns have as many as 40 percent country members, compared with one-third of the churches of the smallest towns. (This statement omits six places with over 5,000 population each, where the non-town members do not come from the open country but from neighboring semi-suburban towns.) It must be remembered that the larger the town center the smaller the proportion of open-country population in their trade-area communities. (Douglass, *Some Iowa Rural Churches,* 1946, p. 10.)

Churches of towns with from 1,000 to 2,000 population tend to have the most balanced distribution between town and country members. Country people greatly preponderate in about one-fifth of their churches. The two elements are divided about half and half in another fifth. The rest of the churches draw three-fifths or more of their membership from townspeople. These medium-sized towns are economically and culturally more easily within the reach of country people than the larger ones. Some of their churches, however, remain almost completely segregated from rural constituencies.

The above data show that the terms of religious partnership between town and country people fluctuate greatly. Generally, the larger the town the less equal is the partnership. But vast inequality also occurs among the churches of the same towns.

Religious Partnership of Town and Country in the Good Community. Is a community better off when relatively more of its people are in open-country churches, or when they are in town churches? Obviously there is no general answer to this question. As has been stated in a study, the two segments of the com-

*TABLE I. PERCENT OF MEMBERS OF 255 RURAL TOWN CHURCHES WHO LIVE WITHIN INCORPORATED TOWNS

Population of Towns	*Number of Churches*	*Total*	*Percent Distribution*					
			90 and Over	*80-89*	*60-79*	*40-59*	*20-39*	*0-19*
Total	255	100.0	17.6	18.4	26.7	21.2	12.2	3.9
Less than 500	30	100.0	13.3	3.3	13.3	36.7	26.7	6.7
500 - 1,000	35	100.0	17.1	8.6	31.4	25.7	11.4	5.7
1,000 - 2,000	70	100.0	24.3	21.4	14.3	20.0	17.1	2.9
2,000 - 3,000	62	100.0	12.9	14.5	40.3	19.4	9.7	3.2
3,000 - 5,000	52	100.0	17.3	34.6	30.8	11.6	1.9	3.8
Over 5,000	6	100.0	16.7	16.7	33.3	33.3	.0	.0

nunity are indissolubly linked in he exchange of goods and services, n the common use of roads and ransit facilities between center and ircumference, and generally in economic fortunes; but they are equally united through a sharing of cultural facilities. . . . The inclusive deal for the rural church must similarly take in both town and open country and must seek a gracious adjustment of relations between the churches of the two types in an individual rural community. (*Some Iowa Rural Churches,* by H. Paul Douglass, p. 10-11.)

Significance of Good Alternatives. No judgment should be passed upon the individual choices involved in church membership. Each individual is to determine for himself the place of his religious affiliation.

With respect to the community, any judgment on a specific situation must of course consider whether or not there are good alternatives. If there are satisfactory and easily accessible open-country churches within the community areas it will be natural for a larger proportion of country people to attend them. This may excuse the town churches for focussing largely on town people. Denominations with numerous churches, like the Methodist, seem inclined to this solution. But where good and convenient open-country churches are lacking and where the churches of a given denomination are so few that there is no alternative but to try to associate the two groups in the same church, it seems wholly inexcusable for a town church to isolate itself, and the church seems sadly inefficient when it fails in its rural outreach. Case studies show numerous examples of flagrant failure to bring a due proportion of the country population into church membership. (*Some Iowa Rural Churches,* by H. Paul Douglass, pp. 60, 67.)

The possibility of free religious association, in terms both of individual and community advantage, must not be lost through lack of opportunity to choose between churches, nor must it require that too many obstacles of neglect or prejudice be overcome.

Overchurching

When there are too many churches for a population to support, in terms of constituents and finances, the natural result is small institutions, inadequate funds and narrow programs.

Population and Churches. The relation between population and churches is shown for eleven study units in Table II. The sample represents 935 churches for an aggregate population of 407,205 people, or 435 persons per church. This counts the total population old and young, and all churches including Roman Catholic.

TABLE II. POPULATION PER CHURCH AND AVERAGE MEMBERSHIP PER REPORTING PROTESTANT CHURCH IN ELEVEN UNITS OF STUDY

Area	*Population per Church, 1940*	*Average Membership per Protestant Church*
Warren	590	200
Sussex	480	153
Whiteside	529	264
Iowa Villages	520	206
(Total	435	186)
Tioga	430	194
Hunterdon	420	160
Douglas	400	189
Hancock	346	178
Lawrence	245	135
Gentry	230	149
Callaway	224	116

The population per church ranges from only 224 persons in Callaway to 590 in Warren, the differences largely corresponding to the percent of the urban element in the population.

Twice too Many Rural Churches. Assuming the long-standing Home Mission Council's standard of 1,000 population per church as normal, the area under consideration as a whole has more than twice too many churches. However one may regard this standard, in the more extreme cases the lack of sufficient constituency is a fairly obvious cause of the feeble strength and low institutional quality of the churches.

The Weaker the Back the Heavier the Burden. Generally the burden of the surplus churches in villages and towns is greatest in the smallest places. In the Iowa sample, for example, of thirty-five communities with 194 churches, where total community population (including the area surrounding the towns) had been carefully calculated, there were more than three times as many churches per thousand in places of less than 500 population than in those of 4,000 to 5,000 (*Some Iowa Rural Churches,* p. 8).

The same trend, calculated for the population of towns alone, was consistently shown in the three Illinois counties included in the study. Places with less than 500 population were carrying more than two-and-a-half times as many churches as the largest places in those countries. In Sussex County, New Jersey, in the area surrounding the local metropolis, there were 985 people per church, compared with only 294 per church in the thinly populated mountainous townships above the Delaware Water Gap. In Warren County, the churches of the more urban zone have 1,170 people per church, while those of the northern exclusively hamlet and open-country zones have only 270.

More People per Church—Larger Churches. A ranking of counties by the average size of the reporting Protestant churches shows that this very generally corresponds with the size of population per church. This is shown in the last column of Table II. It means that, generally speaking, churches which have ampler opportunity use it successfully.

The only counties conspicuously out of line are Warren and Sussex, New Jersey. Warren, however, stands third from the top in average membership, and the erratic position of Sussex may partially be explained by an unusually strong Roman Catholic competition.

All told it is pretty thoroughly established that the common sense expectation is right; namely that where there are more people to draw on the churches will be larger.

Overchurching, as shown by the series of studies, is most obviously present in relatively poor counties which cannot possibly bear the burden of adequate support of so many churches for so few people. Such a situation does not generally result

in a higher Protestant evangelization rate. All the churches put together may not do better in spreading the gospel than relatively fewer do in other counties. The real result is such institutional feebleness that they cannot command more than an ordinary degree of response from the unchurched population.

IV. The Emergent Central Problems of the Rural Church

This section attempts to summarize certain central problems of the rural church as they emerge from the body of recent studies on which the factual report is based.

Achieving a Realistic Understanding of the Elements of Actual Rural Society in America

Fortuitous "Sampling." The aggregation of data on which this Report is based is fortuitous but at the same time fortunate. During recent years, over widely separated areas, there has been a demand for field studies of rural churches. These have chiefly come from councils of churches which have adopted the county as a unit of administration. On this basis the studies take account of whatever phenomena of the church are found within the county.

This method contrasts with deliberate sampling by selected single communities, which constitute the basis of the most authoritative rural church studies of the past, as developed by Brunner, Morse, Kolb, and others. Their single communities were scientifically selected and properly balanced regionally, but (except for a few supplemental studies) they were limited to agricultural villages and their hinterlands, all of them taken out of their territorial setting.

Rural Society within a Larger Social Complex. The data of the present study, on the contrary, are cross-sectional of the rural community as embedded in the total social complex of their included areas. Its sampling, however, excludes rural territory within metropolitan areas.

In the case of the ten counties involved, the result of taking the mine-run of rural non-metropolitan situations is the inclusion of an aggregate population of about 300,000. One-third of this population is non-rural, according to census definition; the other two-thirds are somewhat equally divided between farm and non-farm elements within the rural population, with a slight preponderance of non-farm. The magnitude of the farm element varies greatly, the New Jersey counties being the least agricultural and the Missouri counties the most, as shown in the following comparison.

Percent of rural farm population:

New Jersey Counties		*Missouri Counties*	
Warren	30	Gentry	56
Sussex	36	Lawrence	60
Hunterdon	40	Callaway	71

Contrast with Metropolitan Areas. Irrespective of the differences in the proportion of rural and non-rural, and of farm and non-farm elements in these counties, they are all strikingly different from rural areas within metropolitan territory in the matter of occupation. In the ten counties, there is significant but numerically relatively slight overlapping of farm and non-farm occupations within the families. Farmers are characteristically farmers. On the contrary, in adjacent rural territory within the metropolitan area of Buffalo, in Erie County, New York, four out of every ten employed males living on farms in 1940 were in white collar or industrial occupations, as were 86 percent of the employed females! The proximity of the city within the metropolitan complex allows it to absorb a large share of the occupational pursuits of farm people, while the association of urban and rural people in a characteristically rural situation leaves farm people, in the main, occupationally limited to the farm.

These considerations may call for a modification of the prevailing categories of thought and investigation.

Major Distinctions Restated. The obvious major distinction is the difference between the metropolitan areas and the larger cities on the one hand, and the "town and country" field, including the large town and small city with technically rural territory, on the other.

Within this broadly rural zone the three elements identified have to be continuously related yet distinguished. This is increasingly recognized, as in Kolb and Marshall's "Neighborhood-Community Relationships in Rural Society" (*Research Bulletin, University of Wisconsin, 1944*), which speaks of the "urban area" as "peopled by farm, rural non-farm, and urban families."

From this viewpoint many prevailing sociological concepts will require revision. On the side of the farm population the necessity of this is the more obvious because of its steadily diminishing numbers and proportions to the total population. (See *U. S. Department of the Census Bulletin, June 1949, Series BAE, NO. 3.*) This loss of approximately 3,000,000 farm dwellers since 1940, of course, does not mean a reduced importance of farmers, but rather the increased importance of the remaining ones.

Administrative Differentiation of "Urban" and "Rural." The proposed shifting of concepts has also a clear bearing on administration. First, upon the administration of church research. Most of the professional and semi-professional students of the church are employed either in rural or in urban studies. The scientific training of these researchers ought to enable them to protect themselves against the temptations of partisanship, and to keep them aware of the entire range of social differences. There is, however, some danger that the two areas of study will develop arbitrarily divergent types of emphasis and interpretation. This must be corrected.

The administration of ecclesiastical institutions is largely in the hands of professionals who are definitely assigned either urban or rural church responsibility. They have to accommodate themselves to the fact of limited staff provision, which sometimes tends to make them chiefly interested in the most distinctive forms of their respective responsibilities, to the neglect of the more transitional forms which link their concerns with those of the whole society. In brief, there tends to become

a no man's land between urban and rural experts.

The Continuum of Social Organization. There is of course a continuum of social organization between the most isolated group and the vastest and most complex urban society. In the visible spectrum, each color from red to violet shades imperceptibly into the next. Nevertheless, to the eye, the spectrum is divided into color bands in which the primary colors stand out. There is equally a continuum of urban and rural society, yet the wide differences between the metropolitan and larger city and the rest of the community, and the three distinct elements in the rural zone, namely, the larger town, the farm and the non-farm population, would appear to furnish the primary colors for descriptive sociology. Administrators should recognize them as all within the social spectrum and avoid policies based on the partisan isolation of what is joined together in actual society.

Waits River, Vt.

A. Devaney, Inc., N. Y.

Re-Emphasizing and Refining Terms of Partnership Between the Elements of Rural Society Within Rural Communities

Town and Farm. This is a second central problem of the rural situation. The intimate interrelationship of the rural town and its farm hinterland is an obvious fact. The town is a service station for the country. The larger towns in small cities are relatively more self-contained, as far as the immediate community is concerned. They add specialization. They are frequently characterized by some predominant activity which makes them one-sided as communities. Their community pattern is more complicated. The larger towns, for example, begin to develop suburbs. These things obstruct and dilute, but they do not dissolve the significant partnership of town and non-town in the community.

Increasing Town-Centeredness. The growing town-centeredness of rural communities has furnished the main change in the rural pattern since the automobile age. There has been "an increasing integration of the entire community about the village." (Brunner and Kolb's *Rural Social Trends*—p. 103.) This defines the larger movement. It is going on at a very unequal pace from region to region, and undergoing various degrees of resistance. Growing town-centeredness of the rural community has reduced the number and significance of the functions of neighborhoods. Many neighborhoods have disappeared altogether. On the contrary, some have been revitalized and increased in importance. A highly selective process has been underway within the larger trend townward.

Surviving Neighborhoods. The significance of surviving or increasing neighborhood functions cannot, of course, be judged merely in isolation. Mere return to the neighborhood is impossible. "The sole purpose of neighborhood integrity need not be, indeed can not be, to keep people hemmed in and protected from the larger society, nor to attempt to preserve a primitive culture. Rather, it is to help equip them for life whether they stay or go out—leave the nest. 'The reason we want neighborhood organization is not to keep people within their neighborhood, but to get them out.' Moreover, the only group culture which can have vitality is one which is poured out—given away." (*Wisconsin Research Bulletin 154*: p. 29.) Both neighborhood and local community are parts of a larger world.

Dual Relationship within Community. Rural individuals and families thus have dual relationships—they belong both to the neighbor-

hood and to the community center. It is not a question of either-or but both-and. They are members of a hierarchy of communities.

The question for a given person or family is where the major stress in relationships should fall. This is only partly settled by occupation, particularly as the non-farm rural population gains upon the farm population. The primary problem of rural adjustment is to settle what particular relations should chiefly be realized through what phase of community.

Open-Country and Town Churches. In this context the ambivalence of religion must be regarded. There are and must be both open-country and town churches. But how many of each and what proportion of rural Christians should belong to each type?

In the area being reviewed in the present report, two-thirds of the churches and more than eight-tenths of the members were in towns. Was this as it should be? The open-country contingent in town churches ranged from one-third to nearly two-thirds, the proportion naturally varying from county to county with the number, size, accessibility, and prestige of the towns. On the whole, country members constitute about one-third of the membership of town churches, but even with their country reinforcement town people are left to supply the larger half of the total membership.

The withdrawal of so high a proportion of country Christians from neighborhood to town churches has taken the life of multitudes of open-country churches, and reduced the quality of the life of the surviving ones. The open-country churches of neighborhoods which have been revitalized in the selective process may have become larger and better, but the total movement is against the open-country church, and the end is not yet.

Churchmanship obviously must not take general partisan attitudes toward the situation. It must be for both the town and the open-country church, each at the proper time and situation.

Responsibility in View of Centralization. Without overstressing centralization, the responsibilities of centralization, as it actually is going on, must be recognized as presenting a crucial challenge to the church. It must be absolutely resolved that the shift to town-centered communities shall not mean the abandonment of either people or territory by the church.

Certain elements of the churches' responsibility in the situation appear clear:

1. There is a universal responsibility for pastoral care. Every accessible family must be definitely the responsibility of some church.

2. The symbolism of the two contrasting elements of rural life must be adequately represented and combined in the emotional life and usages of the church. The agricultural celebrations, rural imagery, and whatever is necessary to make the open-country people feel at home in the town church, must be effectively blended with the symbols of the larger community.

3. Increasingly contacts between the church and its members must make use of modern facilities for communication, including radio, correspondence, and modern forms of publicity. The old country church had no bulletin board, because everybody who was interested in it already knew about it. The new rural church must vary its approaches to and contacts with its constituency.

4. Many of the group organizations of the town-centered church will naturally divide into circles, perhaps including several meeting in the open country. Arrangements for transportation to the center, as illustrated by school buses, must be provided as necessary.

During the period of transition from the open-country to the town-centered relationship, these responsibilities must be fulfilled with unusual energy and graciousness. This is not always so.

Undue Resistance to Change. While on the one hand centralized churches have to be challenged to make good in the responsibilities growing out of their situations, it is also necessary to raise the question whether there may not sometimes be a cultural rigidity which resists change unduly. This would appear to be often involved in the issue of consolidated schools. As already noted, the response of rural society to the centralizing trend is very unequal, from region to region, in the United States. Some parts of the country are more set in their positions than others. They can hardly all be equally right.

Certainly resistance to change in some places denies efficiency to the church, and keeps it largely irrelevant to the most basic processes of community life. The conscience of the church must ultimately ask how far this is stupidity, and when stupidity becomes sin!

Positively speaking, it is the clear duty of the church to try to develop good communities by means of the most effective religious partnership of their elements, particularly that between town and open country. The responsibility of church leaders does not end when they have secured good churches. This is far enough from being realized, and it never will be realized except within the context of improved community organization and life.

The Re-education of Communities. In this difficult capacity of guide to communities, the church must obviously be both teacher and learner. It must not set up arbitrary requirements. On the other hand, the current preferences of any given small community need not be taken as final. The church is capable of a larger view for the interpretation and direction of rural life. Multitudes of rural Christians and church groups will have to be re-educated in order that they may choose from a wider range of possibilities than they are aware of.

Applying Recognized Standards of Quality and Efficiency to Rural Church Situations

Standards with Inherent Authority. There are standards whose authority is inherent. It derives from the nature of human groups.

Among these is the necessity that a religious group be large enough for its central stream to be self-per-

petuated. There must be biological continuity. Yet multitudes of rural churches are not large enough to have a sufficient number of young people of marriageable age, so that marriages can take place within the household of faith without physical inbreeding. Their streams of life are continually dissipated and cannot channel from generation to generation within the Christian congregation.

Another equally inherent standard is that a religious group must be cross-sectional of human life. But multitudes of rural churches lack a normal age and sex balance. The more they become old people's homes the surer they are of losing such young people as they might have. The penalty is a crotchety disposition which does not bring out the best in human nature for grace to work upon.

Equally inherent is the requirement that a group be large enough to have a normal chance for the appearance of leadership capacity. Even average talent is not likely to appear in over-small numbers. If the group is too small it may not have the material even for one deacon, one president of a women's society, and one youth leader, to say nothing of one distinguished saint.

The question must be raised in all seriousness whether God ever intended such fragmentary human groups as constitute many rural churches to assume the functions of worshiping and ministering congregations.

Institutional Standards. In contrast with standards which get their authority from the nature of human groups are those institutional standards evolved by the modern church.

Multitudes of rural churches cannot meet the minimum expectations assumed in the declarations, literature, and programs of the standard denominations. Take the realm of *worship.* While Christ is present where two or three are gathered together in His name, it is not clear that the two or three present suitable conditions for public worship. Dr. Albert Palmer wrote a standard book on worship. It was criticized because it was too ambitious for the small church. He consequently wrote another book specifically designed for the small church, *Come Let us Worship* (The Macmillan Company, 1941). Dr. Palmer scathingly characterizes the conditions adverse to worship found in most small churches. Beside the pulpit, Bible, and hymn books, he assumes an altar, a cross, a dossal, a choir, and vestments. If one wishes to brush all these aside as incidental, it still has to be considered that the structure of the historic liturgies, including those of the New Testament, imply numbers of worshipers beyond those available for a large number of rural churches.

Again, in the field of *religious education,* the approach to childhood and youth is always assumed to be through an age adaptation. There must be graded materials and activities. If there are too few pupils for these to be differentiated, education is lame because of its inherent dependence upon group processes. Secular education has long recognized this. Multitudes of rural churches cannot make education a vital group process.

The same considerations apply with even greater sharpness to the freer *group activities* represented by the subsidiary age and sex group organizations of the local church. These are recognized as the expressional aspects of education. A third of the rural churches studied do not have any youth organizations. In this important respect they are incompetent as churches within the life of the community.

It goes without saying that the scanty *pastoral ministries* of absentee and part-time leaders may easily decline to a minimum below which they are scarcely worth performing if any reasonable alteration is at all possible.

It is also clear that when the capacity of a church for its *financial support* will not supply a decent minimum minister's salary and the proper upkeep of the church, it should no longer try to function separately as a church.

Standard facilities afford another aspect of the same problem. Many country churches have a barn-like spaciousness far beyond the needs of the congregations, and some fortunately inherited good architecture. But multitudes of small churches almost entirely lack the modern tools of the churches' group life, particularly for education and recreation, while others lack the amenities, and frequently even the decencies, of modern society.

Paradoxically, multitudes of churches are so small that they cannot have *effective identification with the community.* While it is true in many rural neighborhoods that church and neighborhood are almost synonymous to the persons whom they include, it is also often true that neither church nor neighborhood is a complete community. As shown, the church is too small to have either adequate lay or professional leadership. Similarly the neighborhood is too small to contribute in any profound sense to the central aspects of the life of a larger community with which it is more significantly bound up. Consequently the church's identification with the more dynamic aspects of the life of the people may be exactly the reverse of its neighborhood inclusiveness. It is the writer's conviction that the data show that it is generally

Purposes of This Journal

The purposes of this Journal are:

A. To encourage cooperation among rural churches.

B. To improve the administration of the local church, this to include organization of the church, finance, religious education, community relationships, and the training of lay leadership.

C. To stimulate the development of a Christian philosophy of rural life, this to embrace ethical issues in agriculture, social reconstruction, and government programs; and the content of the minister's message.

Part of Larger Program

The Journal is an important part of an enlarged "cooperative rural church program" that will encourage a national "rural church movement."

impossible for at least the smallest fifth of the rural churches to achieve normal standards in most of the regards above enumerated.

Officially Adopted Standards. Most of the above standards have been officially adopted, at least by implication, by the interchurch bodies designated to lead the rural church. The original "par standard" of the Home Missions Council was adopted in 1923. It has been revised and clarified but probably needs further application to the situation today.

With respect to comity, for example, the question needs to be raised how long a substandard church is to be allowed the exclusive occupancy of the field when it cannot do most of the things which a church is normally expected to do. Might not great numbers of inefficient churches be quietly allowed to die, or else be relegated to the status of shrine churches whose graveyard significance is recognized as having no bearing upon the religious realities of community life today. Then some larger-scale enterprise could take their place. Perhaps both in town and open country there should be fewer and better rural churches.

Determining the Respective Duties of Research, Administration and Responsible Churchmanship

A final basic problem of the rural church concerns the collaboration in its behalf of researchers, local administrators, and constructive thinkers in places of ultimate responsibility.

The Researcher. A research study of the rural church, like the present one, is right in trying to draw conclusions from specific data. This is its province. For example, in any given case *which it had objectively investigated,* it might venture to decide between existing neighborhood and town-centered churches, as to which should survive and which should be chiefly developed. Research is bound to note the fact of the generally increasing town-centeredness of religion in membership and activity, and at the same time the fact that fewer and better open-country churches are also developing.

Insofar as it has to record centralization as an objective fact, research is certainly right in pointing out the responsibility of centralized churches to expand their parishes, multiply their activities and staffs, and really occupy the areas from which their people come. Research will probably be right if it suspects that there may be even greater tensions than there have already been during the period of transition from an old rural pattern to a newer.

But research is not supposed to weigh the human factors actually-and rightly-involved. Consequently it should not attempt to make administrative decisions.

The Local Administrator. In contrast to the functions of the researcher and the responsible churchman at the upper-flight level, the local administrator must act on a multitude of specific issues. He should be able to do so with practical expertness, authority and decisiveness. Ultimately it is with the local administrator and the officials of particular congregations with whom he works, that the institutional fortunes of the rural church have to rest. They are the key men.

Their contribution to constructive churchmanship generally falls in with three general types of community situations dealt with on the level of direct administrative decisions:

(a) *When the objective situation is tenable.* In this situation the churches are neither so weak nor slipping so fast that radical measures must be taken immediately in order to do any effective work. Under these relatively hopeful circumstances the following measures—discovered as already in successful operation in many rural churches—are particularly commended: (1) intensive religious cultivation of open-country families; (2) repeated house-to-house religious canvasses; (3) the broadening of the functions of and the inclusion of laity in local interdenominational ministers' associations; (4) joint evening services; (5) interchurch councils; (6) joint young people's parish organizations; (7) week-day religious education; and (8) participation by the churches in constructive community concerns.

(b) *When the condition of the churches of the community is institutionally so desperate—when they are slipping or dying so fast—that immediate and radical structural changes are demanded,* the following are suggested: (1) exchange of fields between denominations so that every surviving church may have an adequate field and resources; (2) federations of churches; (3) larger parishes—(authentic, not spurious ones); (4) permanent multi-denominational churches.

(c) *In mixed situations where some of the churches of the community are prosperous or fairly healthy while others are dwindling or near death,* the obvious common-sense conclusion is reached that parts of the situation must be dealt with drastically while others may be tolerated or allowed to proceed along present lines—but always in the light of the whole situation and after weighing all the objective facts from the standpoint of Christian ideals and commitments. The final conclusion is that communities should be studied locally and their religious life corporately planned community by community in a continuous co-operative process which shall discover appropriate measures and ultimately result in a larger scale and more effective re-churching of the nation.

The Responsible Churchman. Responsible churchmanship at its highest level is incarnated in the persons whom the churches have made their leaders and authorities in any denomination or field. They stand between the researcher and the local administrator. They must arrive at a corporate interpretation of the facts which the researcher discovers, and deal with them in a more generalized manner and in detachment from the problem of what to do in innumerable specific cases.

In any given type-situation responsible churchmanship must de-

termine whether, on the ground of principles, it is to be accepted or changed. It must decide whether broader denominational policies are right or whether they need to be modified. These men at the top, with their specialized and technical associates, must consider whether their own local administrators are always right and discover when they need to be overruled. Finally, responsible churchmanship must decide whether and when a given community is right, and when it needs to be shaken out of its inertia and re-educated to appreciate broader views of church and community. The responsible churchman must be at once a competent student, originative thinker, and immediate court of appeal. Both philosopher and king he must pray for grace to realize that he is not adequate for the functions of either. Yet the functions must be performed, and there is no one else to perform them!

The partnership of these three types of leadership—the researcher, the local administrator and the responsible churchman—will go far toward raising the conduct of the rural church to the level of statesmanship, as a contribution both to the whole church of Christ and to the country of our loyalty and devotion.

Kansas Rural Churches

• The Department of Agricultural Economics of the Kansas State College of Agriculture and Applied Science, Manhattan, Kansas, has issued a circular on "Kansas Rural Institutions," with special emphasis on case studies of three effective rural churches. The pamphlet was prepared by F. D. Farrell, and shows the influence a rural church has upon the general welfare of its neighboring community.

The three rural churches discussed—High Prairie Methodist Church in Wilson County, Partridge Community Church in Reno County, and Zion Methodist Church in Brown County—are "examples of rural churches that are making substantial, positive and helpful contributions."

These three were chosen because they exemplify three different methods of operation. "Each is indigenous to its own environment, a product of the people and the conditions of its community. . . . The services rendered by the three churches to their respective communities fall into three major categories: religious, social, agricultural."

It is hoped that the discussion will be helpful to individuals, groups and organizations interested in developing increased usefulness of rural churches.

Farm People and Social Security

• E. J. Niederfrank, extension rural sociologist for the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. has prepared a circular bearing the title given above as an aid in promoting the best ways and means of insuring farm people against their needs in periods of emergency and in their old age.

"Farm people, like all other people, hope for security," writes Dr. Niederfrank. "It is an objective of their strivings and desires just as it is of industrial workers and other non-farm people. . . . The rapid developments toward commercialized and mechanized production in agriculture have affected the hopes and securities of farm people, and they have been left out of or do not participate in security programs to the same extent as do other groups."

The fundamental question regarding security for farm people, according to Dr. Niederfrank, "is not simply the question of protection or no protection," but rather "what should be the basic objectives and responsibilities of governmental cooperation in affording farm people a measure of security, and what principles should be observed in doing so?"

This pamphlet, which has been circularized among extension workers in the hope that they may find it useful in conducting educational work, contains many charts and graphs showing statistics by states of various security plans and gives sources of information.

Heifers Proceed Abroad

• About 7,400 animals, mainly heifers, have been shipped abroad since 1944, according to a recent tabulation furnished by the Heifer Project Committee, New Windsor, Md. (In addition to heifers, bulls, goats and horses have been contributed and shipped to farmers in need.)

The first shipment went from Mobile, Alabama, to San Juan, Puerto Rico, in July, 1944. The most recent shipments have been two of about sixty-five animals each to Germany in 1949.

A single mimeographed sheet tells a much more exciting story than most of the mimeographed papers that come to the editor's desk.

From Baltimore, in the ship Henry Dearborn, went 134 goats to Albania on February 1, 1947.

The ship, Alfred I. Dupont, took twenty-five bulls from San Francisco to Yokohama, Japan, on April 16, 1947.

The freighter, F. J. Luckenbach, took 210 heifers to Antwerp, Belgium, on November 8, 1945.

The Rock Springs Victory had on board 248 heifers bound for Ethiopia from Newport News, Va., on March 12, 1947.

Forty-four horses went to Poland on the good ship Mount Whitney, bound from Newport News to Danzig on January 25, 1947.

The Flying Scud picked up 189 goats for Japan when she sailed from San Francisco on April 1, 1948.

The pennant for volume seems to go to a boat named the Lindenwood Victory, which carried 713 heifers from New Orleans to Shanghai on December 19, 1946.

The Church of the Brethren has also enlisted volunteer herdsmen for U.N.N.R.A., when that relief agency shipped cattle but could not find workers to care for the animals on the boats.

Timothy Coop, an American farmer, was noted for his generosity. When asked how he could afford to give so much, he replied, "I shovel out as God shovels in, and the Lord's shovel is larger than mine."

From Bigcity to Countrylane

JOHN P. SALA

• "Remember, son," said a mother, "people are very much alike the world over. You may be sure they all respond to kindness." People are not much different in Bigcity than they are in Littletown, and people living way out on Counrtylane may be people of the highest culture. Those who live in Bigcity may have a few more gadgets in their homes, may be a little more sophisticated than the folk of Countrylane, but in real culture and kindness, the folk of Countrylane are not likely to be surpassed by their cousins in Bigcity.

I began my ministry in Countrylane, a crossroads town in Ohio on the Western Reserve, where the two stores, the two churches and all of the houses were painted white and the bars were painted red. The first year was a wonderful year for this young preacher just out of college. He fell desperately in love with the elder's daughter, and married her. They moved to the city and for forty-one years carried on in city pulpits, save for three years when serving as state secretary.

The city has charms for a preacher. Its libraries, clubs, parks, theatres, and creature comforts are satisfying. Its moving populations, with a constant coming of new people into the community, offer a large opportunity for Sunday school development and evangelism, all of which keeps an earnest minister active. The city preacher need never be lonesome. There is always a call to keep him busy and a noise to keep him awake.

Yankee Preacher in Dixie

But one day our son came and said, "Dad, I wish you would get another church. You have been here a long time. The work has grown. But you are no longer young, and I have noticed during the past two years that the work has been taking too large a toll of your vitality." My companion had been telling me the same thing, and I suspected that probably the work needed younger leadership for its best development. Now, it is not easy to break the ties of twenty years of loving and serving a people. That time had come. The decision had been made.

I wrote a friend in the South that if he knew of any town or village church looking for a minister, I would be interested. The only vacancies of which he knew were three small rural churches some distance apart. There was a modern parsonage in the one village church almost midway between the other two. We moved into the parsonage and became rural ministers.

Since all save one year had been spent in the city, and all of it north of the Mason-Dixon line, we began our ministry with the attitude of learners. Our people began with us the same way, we discovered. For five years now we have been ministering to these people of the village and of the soil, and we have been happy in doing it.

Opportunities of Rural Parish

We talk about the problems of the country church, but we have found few problems in the rural church that we had not faced in the city church. The people in the city church like good sermons, and so do the people in the country, and with their less strenuous program of living, enjoy them a bit longer and more solidly. Rural people live a more lonely life than city folk; they live closer to nature, are more dependent on God, His rain and His sunshine. They sow and wait patiently through rain and drought for the harvest.

True, there is a lot wrong with our rural churches. Many of them have lost their zeal, have gotten into "ruts." The old one-room church building is still good enough, although everywhere around these old church buildings the farmer has improved buildings, improved farm machinery, tractors, plows, combines. The school is no longer a one-room building with a mediocre teacher, but the farm boys and girls are carried by bus to a finely equipped central school building with up-to-date teachers.

Many rural churches have half time or fourth time preaching. Here is one minister who serves three churches, and sometimes helps other orphan churches in the vicinity; preaches for three churches; programizes for three; leads three boards of officers (or tries to); stands back of three Sunday school superintendents; helps three missionary societies; prepares for three sets of missionary offerings; does the pastoral work in three churches; helps movements in three communities. Certainly, it is spreading one's self pretty thin. This state of things has not much promise for the future of rural work. The youth are still in the country communities, just as fine lads and lassies as went forth to our colleges two generations ago, but too small a proportion are preparing to carry on for Christ and His church.

Time to Live

After five years' labor among these village and rural people, one mature city minister can truthfully say he is glad to seek a pastorate in Countrylane. It will take him away from the noise and drive and nervous strain of city work. Of course he will be busy, a lazy preacher is of no value anywhere. He will have fewer night meetings, which allows more time for reading. His ten or fifteen-minute city calls become more leisurely and he takes time for real fellowship with his people. His maturity will, for the most part, become an asset and not a liability, as in Bigcity.

His sermons will come from long experience, enriched by more reading and a quieter, more thoughtful life. He becomes an acknowledged leader in community life and has the opportunity to bring enrichment to his associations. He will not receive the salary he did in Bigcity, but, on the other hand, he will not have the city expense. He will soon learn to live on what he gets and perhaps save a little. He will probably prolong his life and crown it with many more happy years of fruitful service in Kingdom work than had he struggled on with declining nervous energy in the city.

Yes, he misses the stately worship ervice, the pipe organ and the well-rained choirs of his Bigcity church. ut there are compensations. Time o relax. Time to read. Time to fish. ime to live. He awakes in the orning, not with the roaring and umbling of trucks and trains, but o the song of birds. As the beauties nd bounties of nature enrich his fe, he prays, "Dear Lord, I thank hee that my life has been cast in ich pleasant places."

—From *The Christian-Evangelist*

Work With Hands

"Men love best what they do with heir hands" is a principle which hirty-two year old Milo Farmer has een applying for the past year and half in the tiny hamlet of Bow Mills, N. H., where he is pastor of he Methodist Community Church.

Farmer has brought new vitality o a community that less than two ears ago had no central place of vorship except a ramshackle, ancient range hall where only a handful of eople gathered for Sunday worship. y placing the emphasis on the ociological ramifications of com-nunity living, he has brought to-ether people of all faiths and vorked with them to bring to the ittle town a thriving church—new, ttractive and unbelievably busy.

he Community Situation

For many years previous to the rrival of Farmer in the town of ow Mills, there was little or no in-erest in the church. Attendance veraged about four persons per unday, and the building in which he service was held was on the erge of being abandoned.

Farmer, who until recently was lso pastor of the First Methodist hurch in Concord, N. H., came to ow Mills to work with the church s part of his Rural Theology ourse at the Boston University chool of Theology. The young inister immediately perceived that omething had to be done in a urry. He met two men who were members of the church and persuaded them to have him meet other townspeople in the village fire house, the volunteer fire department being the only central organization in the community.

Farmer talked with the group, and outlined what he wanted. A carpenter, who was not a member of the church, agreed to supervise the work of tearing down the stage in the building and placing a new chancel there. Others, some skilled, and some just eager to help, volunteered their services. Among these were three Catholics, four Baptists, four Congregationalists, and about ten who had had no church connections since early childhood.

Among the Workers

At first the men worked only one night a week. But as they worked, they noticed other things about the building which needed improvement. Among the workers were a contractor-carpenter, two carpenter-painters, an electrician, a steamfitter, a plumber, a garage mechanic and three farmers. They all gave freely of their skill and knowledge in refurbishing the church.

Enthusiasm grew rapidly. Finally they decided to devote two nights a week to work on the building. Farmer says of this project: "As long as I am a minister, I shall strive to have projects whereby people can work with their hands."

Attendance Increased

Shrewdly making his appeal on the sociological grounds of increasing interest in the community, Farmer discovered that he didn't need to clamor for church attendance. He made no specific appeal but as the church improved, attendance increased. The same men that worked during the week would appear for Sunday services, despite their diverse religious affiliations. Today, the average Sunday attendance is nearly one hundred, and other church activities are increasing at the same speed. The financial status of the church is sound, and people of other religious faiths, aware that the strength of the community lies in singleness of purpose, have joined the young pastor's congregation.

Farmer is a tall, handsome, vigorous man, with an appealing personality and a strong, vibrant speaking voice. He feels that the surge of community feeling at Bow Mills rose not from his work so much as from the combined desire of the people to do something of value for their town.

Minister's Experience

Farmer was out of high school six years before he went to college, working at a variety of jobs including steel foundry, radio broadcasting, telephone installations, and reading meters for an electrical company.

He had no money for college, but a minister friend of his finally persuaded him to make the attempt. So, with twenty-five dollars, Farmer went to Illinois and matriculated in a junior college. He stayed there one year, then went back to Ohio where he was graduated from Mt. Union College in 1944. He was a student pastor at the Lexington Methodist Church for three of the years he spent at Mt. Union.

Farmer came to the Boston University School of Theology in the summer of 1944, and enrolled as an undergraduate. In September of 1944 he became part-time minister of the Hillsboro, N. H., Methodist Church, and served there until he was called to the First Methodist Church in Concord. He took two years off for pastoral work in New Hampshire, but returned to the School of Theology in 1947, which was when he first went to the Bow Mills Church. Farmer received his S.T.B. degree in June of this year. He is a member of the New Hampshire annual conference, is fully ordained, and recently won a fellowship from Boston University for graduate work.

—From a Boston University *Special Bulletin*

The Convocation Report

The February issue of *Town and Country Church* will contain a report of the annual Convocation on the Church in Town and Country, held at Lincoln, Nebraska, November 8-10, 1949.

The Brethren in Europe

• The European program of the Brethren Service Commission, Church of the Brethren, has been directed since 1948 by the Rev. M. R. Zigler, for many years a member of the Committee on Town and Country, who also served a term as chairman.

The Church of the Brethren was founded by a group of pietists in Schwarzenau, Germany, in 1708. Today the Church maintains a service center for relief, rehabilitation and peace very near its birthplace, but there are no members of the Church in Europe. The Brethren have gone to Europe to help others than Brethren.

By the middle of the eighteenth century all the Brethren had left Germany. Many moved to Pennsylvania. When Brethren moved they had a natural talent for finding good farm land, and today the Brethren are still found mainly "in good farming country."

Brethren Service

In 1940 the Annual Conference of the Church authorized the formation of a special agency, the Brethren Service Commission, to perform brotherly services throughout the world. This agency visits the prisoners, feeds the hungry, clothes the naked, and carries on a social action program in accord with the teachings of one of the historic peace churches. During the war, the Brethren Service Commission emphasized work with the conscientious objectors in the civilian public service camps. Since the war, relief, rehabilitation and peace have been stressed in many nations, especially those ravaged by war.

In Austria, food and clothing have been shipped to the Reconstruction Committee of the Protestant churches of Austria. Brethren workers have assisted in distribution. Three large trucks were furnished by the Brethren Service Commission. Serving projects and a shoe repair shop have been set up in Vienna. Nursery and kindergarten schools have been started. Agricultural demonstrations have been encouraged. Seeds and breeding stock have been shipped.

Types of Projects

In ruined Dunkerque, France, a community service center furnished washing machines, irons and many other necessities to people without homes.

At Walcheren Island, Holland, which was flooded during the war by breaking of dikes, most of the returning inhabitants needed food and clothing—also encouragement in the task of rebuilding. Clothing was given to both adults and children, especially the latter. Help was given to women too ill to do their own housework. Trucking was done for other relief agencies and for individuals unable to do their own. This project has been closed.

In Italy the program was primarily with children. It was closed only recently. In Carrara a club was started for children who attend school only half a day. At the club they were taught games, crafts, personal hygiene and healthy group living. Children who had never before played together were taught wholesome recreation.

Heifers, Seeds, Soap

The Heifer Project, the Seeds Project, the Soap Project all supplied material aid from the United States to the service centers mentioned and many others. The Brethren Service Commission has collected waste grease and processed it into soap in its own factory at Nappanee, Indiana. By sending good seeds farm families have been encouraged to help themselves.

Two canneries, especially built to process food for relief, were located at New Paris, Indiana, and Wenatchee, Washington.

The auction for relief is one of the enterprising methods used to raise part of the large sum of money needed for this service.

In Europe there is a continuing need among farm people for good seeds, breeding stock, fertilizer, machinery, demonstration of new methods. The Brethren in Europe have only completed one year of a five-year program. They hope that in the churches at home there will be no retrenchment.

ATTENTION MINISTERS!
RURAL CHURCH CENTER

announces

Three schools for ministers in Town and Country for the winter and spring of 1950 as follows:

WINTER SCHOOL
January 17 to February 10, 1950

LATE WINTER SCHOOL
February 21 to March 17, 1950

SPRING SCHOOL
April 19 to May 4, 1950

For information and catalogue write

Rural Church Center
Green Lake, Wisconsin

Rural Work Progresses

• A report of the Episcopal Church's Commission on Rural Life was published in a recent issue of *The Living Church,* Milwaukee, Wis.

One of the Church's significant contributions to rural church training and field development is being made by the Roanridge Rural Training Foundation, located eleven miles north of Kansas City, Mo. The present value of Roanridge is approximately $200,000, and plans have been made for the enlargement of all its facilities for greater service.

The Commission, appointed twenty-one years ago, now has a "clearly defined policy, program, organization and budget for the extension and vitalization" of its ministry to rural people, the report states. Special emphasis is being placed on the recruitment and training of priests and laity for "effective Christian leadership in rural community life." The Rev. Clifford L. Samuelson is secretary of the Commission.